Education

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MTV Dismissed - survial of the fittest?

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1. Introduction

"You are dismissed" that is when you know that your efforts have been futile and all your endeavours are a crap. After spending a whole day with kind words the result is obvious, the other man is the better. It all started off so simple a slight variation from a normal date. First of all you met your enemy and after some haughty phrases the goal of the day arrived, the chosen woman. Maybe the problem was that your date was a rodeo and your enemy's date was a club, although you spent your only 20 minutes alone with her with kissing. It could also be that she felt you were nervous to be substituted for one of your replacements that were sitting in a bus next to you. But she had not dumped you yet and her beautiful smile made you miss the chance to take the money for every minute spent with her. Hence you got more and more self-confident. You thought your chances were better because she was disappointed when she told you what she has found in your rooms what she had done before the date. Not only the stains on his bed but also the fact that his mother told her during the meeting with your mothers some days ago, that he has never had a longer relationship, were definitely minus points for the other guy. You would not rule out the possibility that the advices of your friends had been a disadvantage, because all the sms they sent you from the spectator room were full of confusing requests. Anyhow you could not explain the final phrase in her decision: "[...] all things considered I came to the conclusion that you simply haven't got what it takes. So you are dismissed".

Although this was only a fictional summary of the recent dating-shows on MTV the human degradation is perceptible. It is the social Darwinism which calls the equal treatment into question. Inevitably it leads to the issue to what extend can the "survival of the fittest" rule be applied to human society? MTV´s "Dismissed" was probably the first programme that included the possibility to enjoy other people failing. For the most viewers that was the first time they had to ask themselves for the justifiability that underlies that kind of programme and not without good reason, some viewers missed a pedagogical value. Only a few had an idea how to deal with this new format. The following piece of work tries to bring the different aspects and

issues to light. It will focus on the relation to the social Darwinism, as well as the possible consequences for youth, and an analysis of the economic background. Furthermore a series of "Dismissed" programmes are examined to increase clarity. For the same reason the main structure of the conception is kept a close eye on at first.

2. "Dismissed" and social Darwinism

2.1 "Dismissed" and its derivatives

Actually the principle is very old and reminds us in many ways of older well-known dating-shows. The new ones however, are a mixture of game show, dating-show and real-life TV. The basic structure is the same for almost all these shows. In effect the whole programme is concentrated to the purpose of convincing the courted person to choose you over the other guy. Dismissed started in 2001, was the first of that kind of programme, and was named by the "dismissal" of the defeated suitor. It was followed by many derivatives with different additions but the sun rose with the original and because all the similar programmes which followed were based on this I have chosen to write my paper on "Dismissed" even though most of the arguments made could be applied to the other programmes as well. As previously mentioned the two suitors try to convince the courted one to decide in favour for one of them. The sex of the three players does not matter because to some extent homosexuality obtained entry into the show. Each suitor has the free choice of one location where the date will take place. Furthermore the suitors have the possibility to draw a so-called "time-out" card to spent twenty minutes alone with the courted one. After the two dates that are usually a long-lasting process the courted person presents the decision by weighing up the two possibilities. During the dates the rivals are able to use two types of efforts to try and persuade the courted one. On the one hand they can try to present themselves as good as they can and on the other hand they can try to emphasize the weaknesses of their opponents. There are ever-recurring short clips in which they tell about some interim results or new tactics on their own. Lastly the MTV viewers watch this day of dating shortened to fifteen minutes of key scenes and highlights. Theoretically every young person can take part in the show but the

application procedure of MTV sorts out unpleasant candidates by asking indiscreet questions.

2.2 The missing grounds of social Darwinism

Naturally there is the question in what way Dismissed is a social Darwinistic conception. To answer that you have to go to the origin of this pseudo-science. Strictly speaking the issue with the social Darwinism is that it is not dealing with a scientific proven theory but with conclusions of different scientists that presented improperly certain statements of Charles Darwin in various ways. Probably the main problem is that the most famous conclusions of Darwinism have often been misunderstood. There was another interpretation being used than it was meant by its founder. "Survival of the most efficient" has been taken for "survival of the best adapted" in the question about the interpretation of the "survival of the fittest" thesis from Charles Darwin. Also the "struggle for existence" has been misinterpreted as the "fight for existence" and not seen as "efforts to do something for a livelihood" - as it should been explained[1]. In opposite to the social Darwinists, Darwin had not drawn any conclusions for the human society from his theory. So it is not surprising that social Darwinism is tainted with a negative tone because the theory of natural selection was applied to the human society as is was used in the National Socialism. So the ethics of the evolution became an issue with a deservedly bad reputation[2]. Not least because the result of social Darwinism is actually the abolishment of less worth living life and nobody owns the right to play god.

2.3 Inconsistency of social Darwinism in "Dismissed"

So there is the question to what extend MTV Dismissed and its derivatives can also be considered a form of social Darwinism. In Darwin's theory it is proven that for example a giraffe with a longer neck will more easily get leafs from the treetop and as result of that it has an advantage in the ingestion of food equated with better

[1] Tanja Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, (Frankfurt a. M., 2000), p. 36.
[2] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 37.

chances of survival, but it is not proven that this kind of giraffe would more easily find a partner and put the continued existence of its genes into practice. As a result the format of Dismissed is an insinuation of the evolution theory embedded in a spectacle of human humiliation and pigeonholing. For a better recognition the following examples should be some kind of aid. According to Darwin's view the females of a species are the trigger of the selection[3]. Fitness and healthy of the males definitely have influence on their decisions. But the courtship display of birds by comparison or the peacock feather plumage are remnants whose powers of self-assertion cannot be explained simply because they underlie a certain capriciousness[4]. In plain language there is no reason for the courtship behaviour of the birds and the feather plumage is more a hindrance than an aid in case of escape. These abilities demonstrate that the females sometimes made decisions that are important for the evolutionary process, but not really comprehensible. Enlightened from this point of view you have to agree that the freedom of will has an important effect in the case of survival of the fittest. The equal to this freedom is shown in the programme as the will to be victorious, or as the human need for improvement and these drives are individually unmeasurable.

2.4 The issue of the unmeasurable performance

If you search a term to get a comparable value for the suitors the issue of performance imposes itsself[5]. In the end the courted person decides for the better suitor, but is every suitor equal at the very beginning, or is one naturally better? From watching Dismissed one could accurately say that the two suitors are equal in the beginning but according to Darwin one has the advantage from birth. Darwin would argue that the chances of the suitors cannot be equal but the cases presented by the show would seem to disagree. The performance of the suitors is declared as the deciding factor and this contradiction between science and programme gives an abstract definition of performance. Additionally the purpose is excluded from any

[3] Steven Rose, *Darwins gefährliche Erben: Biologie jenseits der egoistischen Gene*, (München, 2000), p. 216.
[4] Rose, *Darwins gefährliche Erben*, p. 217f.
[5] http://www.streifzuege.org/texte_str/str_05-33_scheuringer_sich-verlieben.html

reflection[6] because it would be a significant problem if a suitor does not care whether he will be dismissed or not. Consequently the whole sense of the structure is invalid if the performance is not a deciding factor for the courted person or if one suitor does not go along with the purpose. Owing to this the suitors act only for the will to be victorious or the human need for improvement. So it is an abstract and provocative presentation of social Darwinism with an aftertaste of human degradation, because the solution of the show is based on a sorting of human beings that is effected by threadbare selection criterions.

2.5 Misjudgements of the social Darwinists

Charles Darwin denied that the nature follows any usefulness. According to him the people implied an aim into the evolution, although even this teleology of nature is a result of the natural history and caused by a mechanical way[7]. In this context he mentioned that the nature is filled with uneconomic mechanisms like wasting or failures and from this point of view he cannot define any usefulness[8]. This includes that not every development is an improvement and the social Darwinists forgot that different species can live side by side and they are not forced to extinction anyway[9]. Also they denied the freedom of will and tried to give evidence by explaining the human features as evolutionary developed[10]. They suppressed the facts that there is no society like the human one and that only the human beings have some kind of culture. If you look at this you see that the human beings must have dealt against their nature sometimes and this is not to be explained by the evolution theory[11]. In the social Darwinism the basis of argumentation is often the inequality of humankind. In contrast to the laws of western society this is absolutely correct, all humans are individuals and consequently they are not equal[12]. But even Darwin knew about the human relation to its origin and he explained that man with all his noble features, with his sympathy to the lowest, with his goodwill not only towards

[6] http://www.streifzuege.org/texte_str/str_05-33_scheuringer_sich-verlieben.html
[7] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 66.
[8] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 65.
[9] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 40.
[10] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 186.
[11] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 187.
[12] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 83.

other men, but also towards the lowest living thing, with all this features and powers presents in his build the permanent stamp of the lower origin[13].

2.6 The missed roots of social Darwinism

According to Darwin the human being is still not more than a modified mammal, a degrading status forcing people especially those in the conservative circles to come down off their high horses. So it does not effect wondering that the phenomenon social Darwinism is explained as world and human improvement enthusiasm combined with professional self-interest and elitist ethos that made scientists to handymen of racist policy[14]. To put it in a nutshell the development of social Darwinism reflected the spirit of the times. Times have changed you would think, but the reality looks frightening, because social Darwinistic processes are in the meantime more effective and especially inconspicuous. The neoliberal capitalism presupposed the adaptation of human behaviours to the economic requirements and thus the principle of competition affects spheres which are indispensable for the social cohesion[15]. Even the media try to better their profiteering by illustrating this development. In plain language human beings appear and they are shown voluntarily and without good reason as marionettes of voyeuristic experiments, which are absolutely degrading[16].

3. The reception of "Dismissed" in youth

3.1 The access to the world

Maybe it concerns you, therefore it should be mentioned that it is difficult for an emancipatory society to criticize this development. The problem is that the media have a formative effect and hence their moral concepts could already have influence to our consciousnesses[17]. Even this influence could be a significant problem for the

[13] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 80.
[14] Reusch, *Die Ethik des Sozialdarwinismus*, p. 199.
[15] http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf
[16] http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf
[17] http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf

youth considering that they are the target group of programmes like "Dismissed". According to a study of MTV 65,4 % of the 14 to 29 year olds mentioned that television is their most important source for trends[18]. Additionally the influence gets more clarity taking into consideration that being involved and experiencing on their own became the main access to the world for the modern youth[19]. Hence it is obvious that anything that gets in touch with young people this way could have a far-reaching effect. Especially in the puberty period such programmes are of central importance because they are applied to generate identity[20] and they open themselves to everyday communication[21].

3.2 The media temptation

The desire for orientation and individual distinction is taken up by MTV and the youthful ability to differentiate is sorely tried[22]. It deserves special attention that the necessity to study various lifestyles is intensified by the increase of social differentiation[23]. Strictly speaking MTV tackles the development of the youth from two standpoints. On the one hand they offer lifestyle formats and on the other hand they support the differentiation progress with selection-based programmes. This double-tracked procedure is probably a main reason for the popularity of "Dismissed" and its derivatives. In this context it is astonishing that young people actually dislike dating-shows what a MTV study resulted in[24]. But a listing of the most popular programmes for this target group presented a first placed dating-show and "Dismissed" was at least placed 14th[25]. This apparent contradiction shows the indecisiveness of youth and likewise the affinity for these kinds of formats as a symptom of adolescence. The most dangerous thing is that young people have a tendency towards unreflected adoption of media contents and therefore they

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[18] http://www.viacombrandsolutions.de/media/research/studien-pdfs/Giving_The_Beat_I_Broschuere
[19] Udo Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen: Eine Studie im Auftrag der Landesanstalt für Rundfunk Nordrhein-Westfalen und der Landeszentrale für private Rundfunkveranstalter Rheinland Pfalz*, (Opladen, 2001), p. 313.
[20] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 147.
[21] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 115.
[22] Matthias Kurp, Claudia Hauschild, Klemens Wiese, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland: politische, soziologische und medienökonomische Aspekte*, (Wiesbaden, 2002), p. 25.
[23] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 203.
[24] http://www.viacombrandsolutions.de/media/research/studien-pdfs/GTB3_einseitig
[25] http://www.viacombrandsolutions.de/media/research/studien-pdfs/GTB3_einseitig

construct their own realities[26]. A possible result is the growing of stereotypical attitudes[27] and this is particularly disturbing because it is assumed that the influence of media information is especially huge if the recipient has no direct experiences, which is in case of youth frequently accurate[28]. In addition it should be mentioned that young people undergo several psychosocial crisis situations caused by the interplay between individual and society and as a result the search for identity became the central task of youthful development[29].

3.3 Concepts for the formation of identity

Inevitably it leads to the issue that youth integrates apparent possibilities of orientation like "Dismissed" in the construction of identity and moral concepts. To put it differently they accept social Darwinism as a natural occurrence. In this context Levi-Strauss named the so-called "Bricolage", that is to say the handcraft of identities. It describes how young people find themselves by using "as-if-games" like dating-shows and the Shell study explained that adults provide fewer and fewer useful concepts for the formation of identity[30]. Consequently youth tends to adopt concepts of other sources like television because there is the impression created that you can easily achieve your goals if you do not mind the others. Furthermore it is feigned to a whole youth generation that after passing a selection process you become an admired pop star, but in contrast with that they are also able sit in front of their TV-sets and watch programmes in which absolutely untalented competitors are doomed to failure[31]. Mostly they are additionally depreciated by a member of the jury. Surely the last part is missing in dating-shows, but strictly speaking it is not really missing, the viewer takes on this job in his mind. In this function young people are used to categorize human beings and if it becomes a habit of them, social Darwinism has crept into their ethical model.

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[26] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 38.
[27] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 75.
[28] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 60.
[29] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 314.
[30] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 316.
[31] http://www.readers-edition.de/2006/12/07/kannibalisierung-zur-zuckerweihnacht/

3.4 The encirclement through antisocial structures

This is disquieting because it is an antisocial attitude and it stands, as it was mentioned before, in the way of social cohesion. Even the political behaviour and participation are based on attitudes and motivations which were especially shaped in the youth[32]. In connection with this, the media functions as a vehicle for information, which is necessary for the formation of a political consciousness[33]. Consequently competition programmes have an indirect influence on this formation, but mainly the political system and the constitutional order are responsible for this process[34]. Already Karl Marx knew that it is not the consciousness of human beings which determines their existence; rather it is their social existence that determines their consciousness[35]. But the problem is that capitalism also increases the influence of social Darwinism because the principle is basically the same. Hence the formation of consciousness in youth is more and more surrounded by antisocial structures. Considering the fact that the recipients adopt partly the contents and apply it to their own lifestyle, it also deserves mentioning that this can be effected in simple imitation or in development[36]. Owing to this misinterpreted behaviour patterns can have disastrous effects to the attitude of young people.

3.5 Reasons for the reception

The causal linking between individualization and worth-forming processes and the reception of music televison[37] can lastly lead to the adoption of life customs that were originally created in absolutely different contexts. Furthermore these life customs can be transformed in the whole society[38] and thus they can have far-reaching effects to non-recipients, too. In a discussion with young people it came to light that they attribute an escapism function to these kind of programmes[39].

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[32] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 61.
[33] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 63.
[34] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 65.
[35] Cited after http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf.
[36] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 73.
[37] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 76.
[38] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 77.
[39] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 104.

Astonishingly the lousy piece of acting is assessed negative but anyhow it is a motive for watching the programme. For a better recognition it should be mentioned that young people in the puberty period are affected by a certain uncompleteness[40]. Hence they are chiefly interested in the appearance of the figures[41] and according to that you can recognize a polarization to superficiality and some kind of deadening. This is another problem because these effects intensify the behaviour to ignore things that usually would have a changing over as consequence. Though this is not surprising taking into consideration that young people usually use these kind of formats on the one hand for entertainment and on the other hand for orientation. If the programme is additionally assessed positive then it is often taken for a reproduction of reality[42]. In the course of this it is used as a comparison model[43] and young recipients try to find similarities and differences between them and the candidates.

3.6 The role of the media competence

This possibility of usage gains in problematic character when consulting the Shell study. According to it 17 % of youth have problems with the effects of individualization and 10 % are even on the losing side[44]. It is an ironic fact that these young people try to even out their situation by watching other people failing. This procedure to better the emotional shape at the expense of others makes the social Darwinistic component in that easy to recognize. For these kinds of recipients the programme takes on a supporting function during puberty and moreover it can go so far that this function is extended to a para-social relationship[45]. Especially young and less educated girls are susceptible to this phenomenon and consequently they should be in focus of media pedagogical responsibility[46]. Naturally these effects depend on the media competence of the viewer. Furthermore age, gender, education and social position have influence on the way of reception[47] and hence on the occurrence of

[40] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 324.
[41] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 105.
[42] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 154.
[43] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 318.
[44] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 316.
[45] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 320.
[46] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 325.
[47] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 326.

social-ethical problems. But even newer formats like "Dismissed" portray authenticity to such a high degree that instructions on how to behave are offered in a distinct way. In this context it should be mentioned that the integration of original game-show elements, as the competitive pursuit of victory and the forced powers of self-assertion, possibly causes more intense ways of para-social interaction[48]. Considering the fact that the development of dating programmes is goal-directed to more and more heightened formats, the requirements and the intentions of their success should be examined.

4. The economic backgrounds

4.1 The fundamental change of television behaviour

As it was mentioned before, television is the most important source for trends in youth. That is no wonder taking into consideration that it is a very influential medium in terms of finding a place in society[49]. It is obvious that this condition is inviting to be capitalized on. The social Darwinism in shape of the neoliberalism has made headway hence the influential medium television has to follow. The selection will be the supreme principle on television and there will be many losers and less winners[50]. Certainly the television enterprises endeavoured to get a place in the sun and in this context it is not astonishing that the launch of music television changed fundamentally the television behaviour of youth[51]. Only just the transformation from the connecting function of family circles to a sideline of daily rhythm facilitated the influencing of young people without interference. If you look at the initial situation that brought about the change, it will get more clarity. The public-service broadcasting did not manage it in the 1980´s to satisfy younger viewers because they came into conflict with the conception of a programme close to youth and their pedagogical demand. MTV filled this gap and met with a good response the desire for programmes which were especially compiled for young persons[52]. In the following period the recent variety supported the need for good value formats and it

[48] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 325f.
[49] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 71.
[50] http://www.readers-edition.de/2006/12/07/kannibalisierung-zur-zuckerweihnacht/
[51] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 40.
[52] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 115.

was no accident that the music industry searched at the same time for a marketing instrument which should be global, economical and with an intense scope[53]. Hence MTV gets not only the pioneering spirit but also a grant of finance on its side.

4.2 Exploitation of youthful needs

But to score a bull's-eye in economy was not the only advantage they had, furthermore they alluded to some of the effects which were mentioned before. To be exact the continuous process of differentiation and pluralization in puberty has a need for self-chosen networks of connections as consequence. Additionally the pressure to do well and the different social systems that cause this pressure give the impression that they are inflexible occurences[54]. In plain language the programmes of MTV are on the whole goal-directed to these conditions and attitudes, thus their success is as a matter of fact a continual concession to youth. In connection with this a good example is that political discussions which are processed by MTV programmes often catch the interest of young viewers more than the same on another channel[55]. Besides it is noticed that the behaviour of youth is a kind of seismograph for political development[56] and if you have further information about young people, what is in case of MTV accurate, you can draw helpful conclusions for marketing strategies. To put it bluntly MTV with its social Darwinistic representatives is in no way responsible for the neo-liberal development but they do not miss any chance to make a deal with it. Hence whole life interrelations are organized in advance and because they are connected with the pursuit of profit, they are divided from their practical connection with a possible autonomous expressiveness of human interests[57]. These kinds of marketable life plans are propagated and additionally the tendency to deprive man of his personality and to lower him to the level of a constantly available market subject, that has to submit to the merciless competition criterions of an unleashed challenge of attention, is easy to recognize[58]. This is just the way of

[53] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 117.
[54] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 312.
[55] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 78.
[56] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 62.
[57] Cited after Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 64.
[58] http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf

capitalism and the market researchers of MTV only found possibilities to participate to this development. But this is not the only thing they kept a close eye on.

4.3 The examination of youth minds

The MTV marketing department categorizes the youth with modern methods. Young people are grilled in intense interrogations and their wardrobes are picked to pieces[59]. The endeavours to get a creative-progressive image are conspicuous and on their web presence there are many studies that catalogue youth groupings and their behaviour. Already the names of these studies are strange because terms like "MTV mindset", "giving the beat" and "the MTV generation" are partly semantic confused neologisms[60]. And if you glance over them, it certainly attracts attention that young people are represented as stereotypes and that their preferences and aversions are petty listed. At all events MTV is full of presentiment in relation to their consumers. To put it differently MTV would profit from a stereotyping because youth gets more predictable then. In this context it should be mentioned that the two central processes in youth are the renunciation of traditions and egocentrism. These are excellent starting points for economic efforts because if you find a way to the minds of young people, you could have a kind of monopoly. Another advantage is the fact, that ambivalence moulds the spirit of the times, because that can be exploited, too[61]. You just have to tackle youth with a double-tracked strategy and MTV succeeded in doing that. You could say that their programmes are conflicting and affirmative at the same time.

4.4 The "audience flow" effect

This is not surprising considering that MTV, as a component of big entertainment companies follows an absolutely logical economic course of action and hence they orientate only to the maximization of profit[62]. Consequently MTV "Dismissed" is a

[59] Cited after Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 120.
[60] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 120.
[61] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 311.
[62] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 210.

product that emerged because of the increased arranging of programme contents which lastly serves the cover of a broad spectrum of interest[63]. For example it is not the only programme format with an interrelation to social Darwinism, in effect the number is still growing, so there are meanwhile "Date My Mom", "MTV Next", "Room Raiders", "Love is blind" or "My Own". On the whole they have the same selection principle but the performance is different, thus they attract various kinds of viewers. If you have a look on a timetable presented on the MTV website[64], it strikes one immediately that none of these programmes is broadcasted separately. The director of programmes makes evidently use of a phenomenon that is called the "audience flow" effect. Simply put it deals with the exploitation of the viewer's laziness. It is a proven fact that a following programme of the same kind is tendentiously watched[65]. The integration of this effect is the attempt to use additional levels of the net product chain[66].

4.5 The cheapness of "Dismissed"

To put it bluntly "Dismissed" is a commercial product that is made on market conditions and its main task is the production and illustration of conversation[67]. Also the continual repetition of the types of conflicts, topics and locations is a basis for the economical carrying out of the programme on television[68]. Strictly speaking it could probably not be cheaper because the "actors" are less rewarded, there is no screenplay, the locations are basically public and actually only a camera is needed. If you can talk about an expenditure at all, it is the application procedure, but this is also an instrument to "dismiss" unpleasant candidates and from this point of view it is balanced. In this context "Dismissed" and its derivatives could be called a programme filler and in addition a down-market one, too. The necessity to bring in profits constantly with the "consciousness industry" smoothes the way for those bereft of content low-budget programmes[69] and as it was mentioned they have

[63] Kurp, *Musikfernsehen in Deutschland*, p. 210f.
[64] http://www.viacombrandsolutions.de/de/sender_programme/mtv/programmwochen.html
[65] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 55.
[66] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 52.
[67] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 317.
[68] Göttlich, *Daily soaps und daily talks im Alltag von Jugendlichen*, p. 39.
[69] http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf

various economical advantages for their producers. To lend weight to several issues of the above, sixteen episodes of "Dismissed" were examined.

5. The examination of 16 "Dismissed" episodes

5.1 General striking features

But first of all it should be called to mind that the viewer only watches a to fifteen minutes shortened version of a whole day. Hence the broadcasted clips had been selected by the editors to serve a certain purpose and this is above all the increase of the attendance figure. Inevitably every episode comes after a "Love is blind" programme and this is the mentioned "audience flow" effect. First a recent derivative is broadcasted and then the classic of the genre follows. This clearly serves the establishment of the newer format. It also does not effect wondering that the end of "Love is blind" is immediately connected with a preview of the following programme and in many cases a commercial break represents the culmination of the whole. In general there are a lot of commercials for a programme with a length of thirty minutes. But if it starts at last you could see a punch-up in the leader and not forgetting a courted woman that shoves away a dismissed candidate.

5.2 The rule of the unreflected purpose

In this context it is astonishing that in six episodes[70] the suitors introduced themselves as long-standing friends and in one case[71] they are even ex-boyfriends. The ideology of fighting spares no-one and an existing relationship should not be a hindrance but a challenge. The suitors are agreed that now they are only interested in the victory, however unpleasant the courted one may be. The intention of the editors is obvious, they try to provoke intensified conflicts to attract more and more viewers. But which message is conveyed especially to the target group? Young recipients get the impression that the will to win has top priority. It is pure unadulterated social Darwinism if even your friends are in competition with you. A probably fitting

[70] With reference to the episodes: 5, 6, 10, 13, 14, 16.
[71] With reference to episode 4.

example is the final statement of a successful suitor: "[...] I mean you can't turn a loser into a winner [...]". That is a degrading comment and it is an allusion to the fact that the conditions of the suitors were probably not equal. Additionally it is more confusing that even this suitor made clear at the beginning of the episode that the courted guy is actually not her type. But this occurrence represents no exception because on the whole there are five situations[72] that usually render the competition invalid and in one case[73] the suitors sympathize even more with each other than with the courted person. Obviously nobody is bothered about the issue that hence it makes no sense to continue the game. Consequently it confirms the fact that the law of jungle apparently comes into force and the animal fight is declared open. This occurrence refers to the conclusion that the purpose of the programme is excluded from any reflection, come what may. And to intensify the conflicts additionally, five cadidates[74] emphasize particularly that they want to see the suitors fighting for them. So the pedagogical value leaves a great deal to be desired again because young viewers may believe that life in society is a permanent clash and furthermore if they do not want to be on the losing side, they have to eliminate anybody who gets in their way. A similar behaviour could be recognized at the beginning of every episode. The opponents have a short meeting and supposing that they are no friends you are often[75] able to notice a kind of categorization. Either they rub the opponent's nose immediately in their slights or they explain their lay conclusions in a short statement to the viewers. This procedure is probably the most degrading component in an episode and its social Darwinistic aftertaste is obvious.

5.3 Superficiality in "Dismissed"

But to understand the superficiality that underlies most of the clips, the main topics are brought out. It strikes one immediately that there are many allusions or even requests to show bare skin[76]. To give a concrete example it is referred to the demand of a courted woman: "I think you can even turn your shorts off and do a little spin or

[72] With reference to the episodes: 7, 9, 10, 13, 14.
[73] With reference to episode 3.
[74] With reference to the episodes: 1, 3, 7, 14, 15.
[75] With reference to the episodes: 1, 3, 7, 8, 11.
[76] With reference to the episodes: 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14.

something"[77]. It is a legitimated question why there is so much reference to get naked, especially if you take into consideration that it is the first date. But MTV already asks in the application form whether it would be a problem for the candidate to turn off the clothes except a pair of swimming trunks[78]. It is provoked that the suitors show bare skin because sex sells and that is no secret. Therefore it is no wonder that sex is an often chosen topic in conversations[79]. To substantiate that an example would be helpful. But it should be mentioned first that the courted guy said this, before the suitors took part in a motor race: "[...] I'd like to watch girls compete, especially to know how to handle your stick well"[80]. A tasteless sexual allusion that usually would put most girls to flight is in "Dismissed" quite normal. In this context the issue of the pedagogical value imposes itself again. A viewer in the puberty period would probably get an increased tendency towards superficial opinions although this is already the case in this developmental stage. The programme comes to light once more as stereotype intensifying and it is disquieting which great importance is placed on superficiality with reference to the choice of partner. Traditional values as character and behaviour are probably too long-winded and irrelevant. For instance a courted guy explained his demands before the date: "Just three things I gonna be looking for: number one: the booty; number two: his [!] personality and a guess how she handles herself; number three: the booty [...]"[81]. It is a sad state of affairs when a programme is of such a low standard, but it is probably much more sad that there are still enough viewers. Considering that appearance makes a decisive difference, the issue of performance arises again.

5.4 The lack of a comparable value

Maybe it is pure chance but in three episodes one suitor does the splits[82]. In other cases the efforts are making "the worm" versus cracking jokes[83], a toboggan

[77] With reference to episode 14.
[78] http://www.berlinonline.de/berlinerzeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2003/0220/medien/0015/index.html
[79] With reference to the episodes: 2, 3, 5, 12, 13, 14.
[80] With reference to episode 3.
[81] With reference to episode 12.
[82] With reference to the episodes: 1, 7, 12.
[83] With reference to episode 9.

contest[84], a little dance versus crying out loud that the courted one is the cutest girl ever or even arm-wrestling[85]. There is no doubt that these tasks were managed outstandingly but a common sense would ask legitimately to what extend those have something to do with the convincing of the courted one. Probably more interesting is certainly the question whether a kiss has influence on the outcome. You could say that a kiss or especially the refusal of it is a deciding factor but this is empirical difficult to prove, because there are too many different things to take into account to get a clear result. Anyhow in thirteen of sixteen episodes[86] a kiss happens and in the first episode it is even used for bribery. The fact that many kisses happen is principally not reprehensible, but that these are sometimes[87] in the opponent's presence is all the more confusing. Not only for the often dumbfounded opponent but also for the viewer, especially for the mentioned risk group. Because the impression is given that the choice of partner is like trying on shoes. Altogether it is to say that the issue of performance could not be solved and thus the view of Darwin is confirmed. The fact that it is pretended to the recipients, that everybody is able to win, turns the programme into a farce. Young viewers could believe that every relationship is a question of performance and that they have to join in every nonsense to achieve their goals.

5.5 The non-performance-related decisions

You could say that relationships get a material character because psychological requirements are hardly taken into consideration. The dismissals are in agreement with this fact and the way how they go off is already paradox. First of all the performance of both suitors is emphasized but the following judgement is actually without reference to it. There are some[88] decisions that sound as if they are concurring to a measurable value, but these can only be counted as well-meaning attempts. Most candidates get dismissed because they showed no real interest[89], they

[84] With reference to episode 8.
[85] With reference to episode 16.
[86] With reference to the episodes: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.
[87] With reference to the episodes: 3, 4, 10, 12, 15.
[88] With reference to the episodes: 2, 11.
[89] With reference to the episodes: 1, 8, 9.

had less sympathy[90] or the courted one was bothered about a feature of them[91]. In principle it does not matter which reasons were given because it is obvious that they all depend on occurrences that have no connection to the programme. As it was mentioned in the last sentence of the introducing story you should have what it takes. But as long as nobody can define "it" universally there will be no comparability and hence no mechanization in case of the choice of partner. But to win a general impression from all these different aspects, they should be interpreted on the whole.

6. Final summary and conclusions

6.1 Final conclusions referred to the recipients

To emphasize the role of humanity it should be started with the actual victims. The youth feels restricted in the social systems and because of the fact that adults put fewer useful concepts at their disposal, they escape to their own experiences to generate their identity. Surrounded by antisocial structures they undertake the job of a jury and start the categorization of stereotypes. Lastly only their media competence decides, if they take it funny or serious and nobody can answer the question, whether they will ever understand that there are actually six thousand millions of different stereotypes. Overtaxed by this huge number they transform their own life customs into the society and even this section of the population is an indicator of the political development. Hence we should ask ourselves, if we lost the track of things a long time ago.

6.2 Final conclusions referred to the profiteering

This question is certainly not put to the profiteers. Because pushed by improvement enthusiasm, professional self-interest and elitist ethos, as once the social Darwinists, they press the principle of competition into the last corners of social cohesion. To even these areas their cameras are focussed on, to get us to part with our last money. Through "mindsetting" they find the weak points of the following generation to

[90] With reference to the episodes: 6, 10, 13.
[91] With reference to the episodes: 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16.

tackle it with double-tracked strategies and with more and more intense programmes. These incredibly cheap formats are palmed off on young people to get a monopoly that is enabled through the increasing youth egocentrism. Lastly the renunciation of any pedagogical value leads to superficiality and stereotypization.

6.3 MTV "Dismissed" – survival of humanity?

Programmes like "Dismissed" do their share by using an unproven theory and illustrating it at the expense of the equal treatment. Youth betters its emotional shape while other people waste their performance in voyeuristic games. Your best friend suddenly finds himself in the role of your opponent and actually his only goal is to defeat you. You will not reflect this purpose because now he is your evolutionary rival. But at the end not the fittest one of you is the winner, because in this case a woman is the trigger of the selection and her deciding factors are mainly independent of what you have done the whole day. Maybe you should have listened to Darwin when he said that nature does not follow any usefulness. His "survival of the fittest" thesis takes no effect but its application is accompanied by a whole lot of processes that change human beings into material goods. Already Karl Marx took the view that we should fight all conditions in which mankind is a humiliated, oppressed, deserted or scornful creature[92]. But the problem is deep in our social system and if we do not resist the neoliberal capitalism, we are doomed to failure and I do not want to imagine what that means.

[92] Cited after http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/aktionen/werner.pdf.

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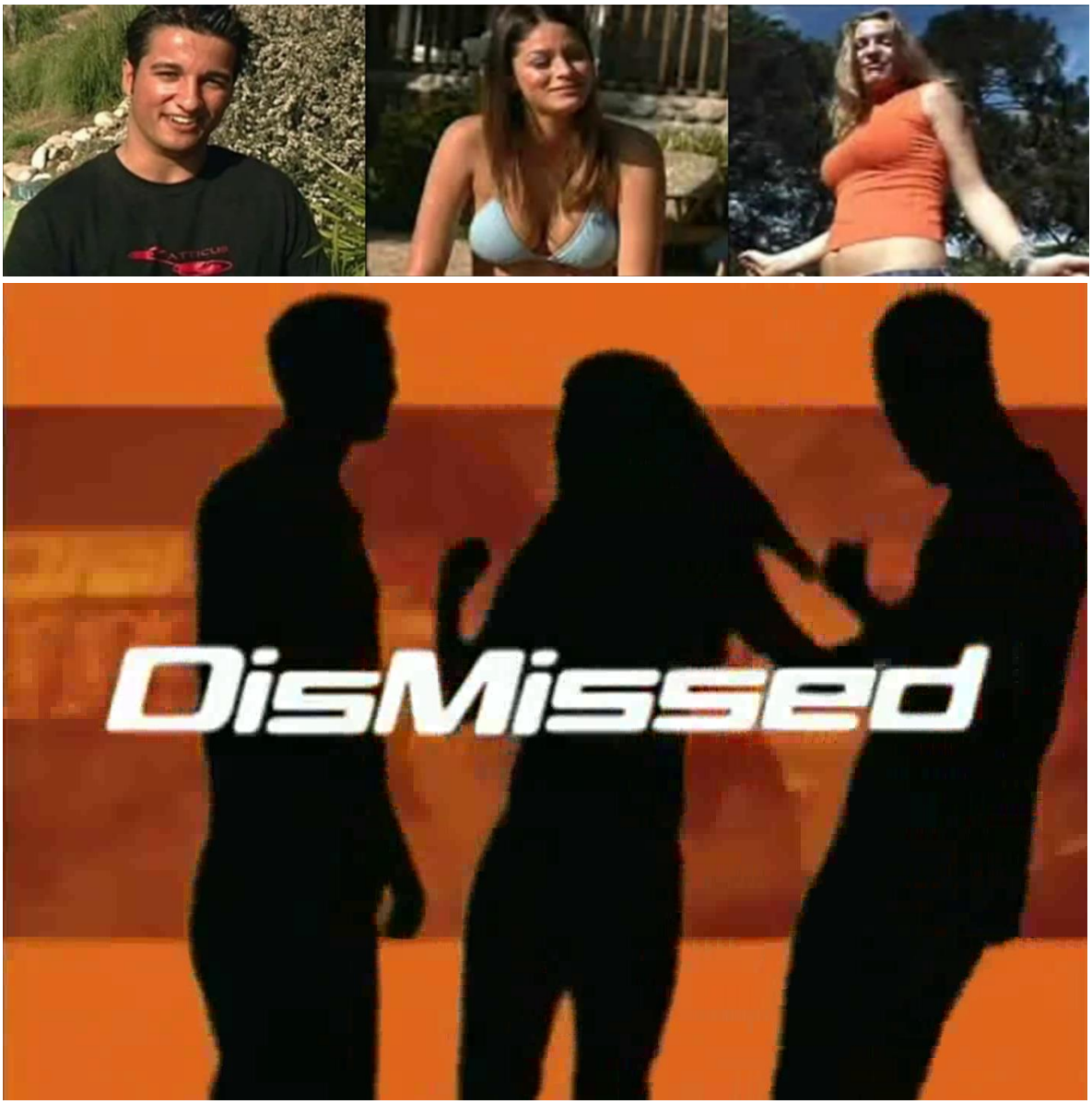
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